

# Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies:

## An American Citizens Services Newsletter

### GREETINGS FROM THE DEPUTY CONSUL GENERAL



Here we are, nearing the end of 2011 with the Hajj season behind us and the U.S. holiday season around the corner. If you are planning to travel outside Saudi Arabia—whether to the U.S. or to another country—we ask you to take a moment to review your travel documents to make sure your passport and your family members' passports have at least six months' validity and that you all have sufficient passport pages. If not, don't delay. We urge you to schedule an appointment with ACS to renew the passports or add pages soon.

Visa processes are complicated and differ from country to country. We're asking assistance from all U.S. citizens in the

Kingdom to complete and return the visa questionnaire attached to this newsletter. We hope the results will help us reach a better understanding of the Saudi visa process and the experiences of U.S. citizens, with the goal of providing better services. Thanks in advance for your participation.

As always, we urge all American citizens to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to stay informed of important information and to help us reach you in case of emergency. Also, remember to check <http://travel.state.gov> for the latest country specific information before you travel.

Best wishes for safe and happy travels,  
*Cecelia El Khatib*

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### How to Reach Us

**The US Embassy is located in the Diplomatic Quarter, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**

**Public hours:** Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, 1:00pm to 3:30pm (CLOSED ON MONDAYS).

Routine services are available by appointment only.  
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>

**Phone:** (966)(1)488-3800  
**Fax:** (966)(1)488-7670

### Are you or is someone you know a newcomer to Saudi Arabia?

*Help newcomers to the Kingdom by reminding them to register with the Embassy or nearest Consulate using **STEP** online at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>*

*This free service offers registered U.S. citizens updates on important regional issues, travel warnings and alerts, and provides a point of contact for citizens and their families in case of emergency.*

### TRAVELLING? KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

Be sure to check out Country Specific Information, including up-to-date travel and other messages to citizens at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

Don't be caught unaware! Become familiar with important facts and situations in the country you'll be visiting! Whether driving across the causeway to Bahrain or hopping on a plane to China, prepare in advance.

Smart Traveler, the official State Department app for U.S. travelers, invites you to see the world with easy access to the frequently updated official country information, travel alerts, travel warnings, maps, U.S. embassy locations, and more.

There is free enrollment through I-tunes [http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smart-traveler/id442693988?](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smart-traveler/id442693988?mt=8)

[mt=8](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smart-traveler/id442693988?mt=8), compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad.

With Smart Traveler, you can create personal itineraries, add notes, and organize your trips.

Smart Traveler also provides access to the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Free STEP enrollment enables the State Department to better assist you in emergencies such as natural disasters, unrest in foreign countries, or lost/stolen passports overseas. During your travels, STEP can help your family and friends reach you in an emergency.



## NEW VOTER REGISTRATION AND BALLOT REQUEST NOW AVAILABLE



The online electronic version of the revised Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) is available now at <http://FVAP.gov>. The FPCA registers and requests ballots for voters simultaneously. Voters can visit [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) to use the online wizard or access the PDF fillable forms. The FPCA is a standard form accepted by all 55 States and Territories for uniformed and civilian overseas voters to apply for an absentee ballot. The length of time the FPCA is valid and its completion requirements vary by State so be sure to refer to the [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) web portal or the [2012-2013 Voting Assistance Guide](http://www.fvap.gov/vao/VotingAssistanceGuide).

The revised FPCA is wholly compliant with provisions of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting

Act, as amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act in 2009, containing space for the required information but structured in a more logical and usable flow. FVAP conducted a series of usability assessments with the previous form resulting in substantial improvements using many established best practices for election-related forms.

Previous versions of the form can be used by voters; however, be sure to use the current state information from [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) to ensure your local election official receives all the information required to register you and send you ballot to you. Voters should apply for absentee ballots in January of each year or at least 90 days before the specific election in which they want to vote. If your mailing address changes, especially between the Primary and General Elec-

tions, you will need to send in an updated FPCA.

All States and territories are required to send ballots at least 45 days before an election. If you have not received your ballot 30 days before the election, go to the [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) web portal to see if your State has an online ballot delivery system. If not, you can use the back-up write-in ballot wizard also on the [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) web portal. Additionally, the 2012-2013 Voting Assistance Guide (<http://www.fvap.gov/vao/guide.html>) is now available at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov). This compilation of absentee voting regulations, laws, deadlines, and procedures reflects the States' changes and deadlines for the upcoming elections.

A complete 2012 election calendar is available here: <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/calendar.html>

## FLORIDA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, SOUTH CAROLINA, MISSOURI, ARIZONA AND MICHIGAN VOTERS -- SUBMIT YOUR REGISTRATION AND BALLOT REQUEST FORM FOR UPCOMING EARLY PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

Overseas voters should submit a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) NOW to ensure they have the opportunity to vote in the upcoming early Presidential Primary Elections:

- **New Hampshire:** January 10, 2012
- **South Carolina:** January 21, 2012
- **Florida:** January 31, 2012
- **Missouri:** February 7, 2012
- **Arizona:** February 28, 2012
- **Michigan:** February 28, 2012



Many States allow you to vote only in the year your ballot request (FPCA) is received, but due to the early primary dates, these States have made an exception. These States allow you to submit your FPCA now in 2011 so that you receive your State ballot and return it in time to be counted for their primaries.

To ensure you are eligible to vote in other 2012 elections, including the General Presidential election, you must submit an FPCA **AGAIN** in January of 2012! All members of the U.S. Uniformed Services, their family members and citizens residing outside the U.S. who are residents from these States

should submit an FPCA for these elections by going to [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) or by following the instructions in the Voting Assistance Guide, also available at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov).

Be sure you include a phone and/or fax number and an email address on your absentee ballot application in case your local election official needs to contact you. And, remember, many States allow you to submit your form electronically, and deliver your ballot electronically or provide online ballot access. Go to [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) or your State's election website to see how you can return your form. Check your State's election website for specific information on candidates, elections, contact information and links to your local election offices. You can find your State's website at FVAP's web portal: <http://www.fvap.gov/reference/links.html>. To find out the status of your registration/absentee ballot request, contact your local election office at <http://www.fvap.gov/shortcuts/wheresendfpc.html>, or visit your State website.

**The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)** -- The FWAB is a backup ballot. If, 30 days before the election, you think you will not receive your State ballot in time to vote and return it, vote the FWAB! Go to [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) and get started! You may also submit the FWAB any time after submitting an FPCA.

## SOCIAL SECURITY ANNOUNCES 3.6 PERCENT BENEFIT INCREASE FOR 2012



### Cost-of-Living Adjustment is First Since 2009

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for more than 60 million Americans will increase 3.6 percent in 2012, the Social Security Administration announced today.

The 3.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that nearly 55 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2012. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 30, 2011.

Some other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum

amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$110,100 from \$106,800.

Of the estimated 161 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2012, about 10 million will pay higher taxes as a result of the increase in the taxable maximum. Information about Medicare changes for 2012, when announced, will be available at [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov).

For some beneficiaries, their Social Security increase may be partially or completely offset by increases in Medicare premiums. The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated.

To read more, please visit: [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola).

### Did you know...

- The Social Security Act was signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on August 14, 1935. Taxes for Social Security were first collected in January 1937, and the first one-time, lump-sum payments were made that same month. Regular ongoing monthly benefits began in January 1940.
- Social Security was originally just a retirement program. Under the original law, it only paid benefits to the primary worker. In 1939, the law was changed to add survivor benefits to the retiree's spouse and children. In 1956, disability benefits were added.
- All members of Congress, the President, Vice President, federal judges and most political appointees are covered by Social Security and pay into the program.
- Want to read the original law from 1935? Check out the website at: <http://www.ssa.gov/history/35actinx.html>

## U.S. PASSPORT APPLICATIONS -- REMINDER OF THE REVISED U.S. BIRTH CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENT

Since April 1, 2011, the U.S. Department of State requires the full names of the applicant's parent(s) to be listed on **all** certified birth certificates to be considered as primary evidence of U.S. citizenship for all passport applicants, regardless of age.

Certified birth certificates missing this information will not be acceptable as evidence of citizenship.

This will not affect applications already in-process that have been submitted or accepted before the effective date.

For more information, see 22 CFR 51.42(a) at: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-index?c=ecfr&sid=3ef54a9fd19593b22fedcd10925d330a&rgn=div6&view=text&node=22:1.0.1.6.33.3&idno=22>

To obtain a new birth certificate, see the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>.

**In addition** to this requirement, certified copies of birth certificates must also include the following information to be considered acceptable *primary* evidence of U.S. citizenship:

- **Full name of the applicant**
- **Date of birth**
- **Place of birth**
- **Raised, embossed, impressed or multicolored seal of issuing authority**
- **Registrar's signature**
- **The date the certificate was filed with the registrar's office (must be within one year)**

If you cannot obtain a birth certificate that meets these requirements, please see [Secondary Evidence of U.S. Citizenship](#).

### PASSPORT



United States of America



### Important!

Your U.S. Passport is a highly-coveted document. **Keep yours in a safe place**, and do not give it out for anything other than official purposes.

If your passport is ever lost or stolen, **report it IMMEDIATELY** to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

**Make a copy** of your passport and keep it in a safe place with other important documents like copies of your marriage and birth certificates.

### Did you know...?

- The United States Department of State issued the first U.S. passport on July 8, 1796.
- Passports and letters of travel go back to ancient times—the first mention of a passport can be found in texts from 450 BC!





## We Need Your Help!

The goal of visa reciprocity is to obtain progressive visa regimes, consistent with U.S. national interests, laws and regulations, to encourage international travel that benefits U.S. travelers and business.

The U.S. Government seeks conditions which accord with the U.S. national interest, consistent with U.S. laws and regulations, to

govern the validity of nonimmigrant visas and the fees charged on a reciprocal basis as required by the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) Sections 221(c) and 281. In other words, the amount of time a visa to the U.S. is valid is directly related to how long U.S. citizens' visa are valid in their host nation.

To achieve reciprocity, the INA does not require that our visa schedules mirror those of the host countries exactly.

Consular officers have a responsibility to keep abreast of current practices in each country and to keep the Department of State informed of developments.

We would appreciate your help in completing the attached survey describing your experience in the Saudi visa process.

Department of State

## UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The U.S. Embassy and Consulates will be **closed** on the following days:

**December 25** – U.S. Christmas Day

**January 1** – U.S. New Year's Day

**January 14** – U.S. Martin Luther King Day

## WHAT IS GLOBAL ENTRY?



Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States.

To enroll in Global Entry, applicants must first file an application with Customs and Border Protection, and then submit to an interview and background check. There is a \$100 non-refundable fee for the application. During the interview, the applicant's fingerprints are captured and a digital

photo is taken.

Though intended for frequent international travelers, there is no minimum number of trips necessary to qualify for the program. Participants may enter the United States by using automated kiosks located at 20 major airports across the United States <http://www.globalentry.gov/terminalmaps.html/>

Participants present their machine-readable U.S. passport or permanent resident card, place their fingertips on the scanner for fingerprint verification, and make a customs declaration. The kiosk issues the traveler a transaction receipt and directs the traveler to the baggage claim and exit. As a Global Entry member, you must de-

clare all goods you bring into the United States by answering

the customs declaration questions at the Global Entry electronic kiosk. You do not have to complete the paper customs declaration form before arrival.

For further details about the Global Entry Program and enrollment requirements, please check out the website at:

<http://www.globalentry.gov/about.html>



## KIDS CORNER

### THANKSGIVING WORD

#### SEARCH

F T U R K E Y W G M  
A V T S E V R A H S  
M P U M P K I N P F  
I N D I A N S A I L  
L R V R C S D Q E T  
Y O K G K K C R Q I  
K C O L O N Y C B S  
X N O I F A L L V Z  
S R C P J H I J P V  
N S U W F T S A E F

**COLONY COOK CORN FALL PIE SAIL  
FAMILY FEAST HARVEST INDIANS  
PILGRIMS PUMPKIN THANKS TURKEY**

## THIS SPACE IS FOR...SPACE!

### What Is NASA?

NASA stands for National Aeronautics and Space Administration. NASA was started in 1958 as a part of the United States government. NASA is in charge of U.S. science and technology that has to do with airplanes or space.

### What Does NASA Do?

NASA does a lot of different things. NASA makes satellites. The satellites help scientists learn more about Earth. NASA sends probes out into space. NASA scientists study things in the solar system, and even farther away. A new program will send humans to the moon, Mars and beyond. People at NASA work on ways to make air travel better for everyone on Earth, too. People at NASA also share the things they learn with others. This can help make life on Earth better.

**Do you like science, math and learning new things?** Would you like to be an adventurer? Would you like to plan future missions to other planets and outer space? People in NASA's Education Office work hard to share news about NASA's missions to learn about Earth and space with teachers. Then teachers work with students to get them ready to be engineers, scientists and astronauts. Learn more about what NASA has for students in grades K-4 on NASA's education Web pages. NASA's Web Site for Students in K-4 <http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/index.html>

